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PROFESSOR HOLDICH'S DISCOURSE

ON THE

CHARACTER

OF

REV. WILLBUR FISK, S. T. D.

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TRUE GREATNESS:

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

CHARACTER

OF

REV. WILLBUR FISK, S. T. D.,

LATE PRESIDENT OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,

Delivered before the

FACULTY AND STUDENTS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY,

IN THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.,

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 3D, 1839,

And now published by their Request.

BY REV. J. HOLDICH, A. M.,
PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND BELLES LETTRES.

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DISCOURSE, &c.

"KNOW YE NOT THAT THERE IS A PRINCE AND A GREAT MAN FALLEN THIS DAY IN ISRAEL."—2 Sam. iii. 38.

To avail ourselves of the virtuous example of the illustrious dead, is the chief advantage which the living enjoy in the midst of sorrow for their departure. And the influence of their virtues is the only legacy they can bequeath to mankind, in the contemplation of which they can find satisfaction in a better state of being. Example, it is often said, is more available than precept. It is so; but there are many things to weaken the force of an example, while living, which exist no longer when the subject is taken from us: and even the best and brightest example, however influential while living, seems to possess still greater force and authority when the subject is enshrined in Heaven. Then our vision can no longer be jaundiced by envy; nor our judgment perverted by prejudice; nor our affection chilled by the practical reproof of a living object; while the heart is open to all the tenderer influences of latent affection and respect, called vigorously into action by the touching remembrances of departed scenes. Then when the heart is yielding to all gentle and affecting emotions, how readily do the images of remembered virtues imprint themselves upon the soul, and awaken deep toned aspirations after a similitude of character!

And if, in connexion with true greatness of character, the causes can be presented which produced it, the prac-

tical efficiency of such an example may be greatly increased, particularly if the causes be such as lie within our reach.

The character of the venerated subject of our present discourse possesses peculiar advantages in all respects. His was a character truly eminent; one, too, that was less weakened in its force by inimical influences than that of almost any other man with whom it is our privilege to be acquainted; and yet, owing to the love universally felt for him, will be still more influential now that he is gone. It is a character, too, raised to greatness by causes, in a great degree, within our reach For the foundation and superstructure,—the origin and completion of it,—was, the deep seated and vigorous influence of the christian spirit and principles. That which imparted to it beauty and dignity, excellence and symmetry, was, the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and while we render the admiration and acknowledgement due to the human medium of its exhibition, and hold up a human example for our edification, still we ascribe the glory to Him to whom alone belongs the praise of every good word and work.

The words of our text were uttered by David in reference to the death of Abner, who, out of envy and revenge, was treacherously assassinated by Joab the son of Zeruiah. With the history of this transaction we shall not now meddle; since the words we have chosen are only intended to be introductory to our principal design on this occasion.

It shall be our endeavor, in this discourse, to shew what constitutes true greatness of character;—to shew that these elements belonged to the venerated subject of this discourse;—and to render his example available, if possible, to our own improvement.

Never were you more imperatively called upon to lift up your hearts to God and pray that his blessing may rest upon our endeavors to serve him!

I. What constitutes true greatness of character.

Greatness, though in a positive form, is but a relative term. There is no such thing as absolute greatness short of Deity. Men are only great by comparison with one another; or with some ideal standard to which reference is made. He is usually esteemed great that is conspicuous in his own circle of influence, that stands out prominently from the mass of men, that is above the general standard of character about him. Hence it follows that he who is great in one age, or circle, or position is not necessarily so in another. Much also depends on the tastes of his contemplators: since qualities which some esteem, others despise; and what obtain the admiration of one class, by a different class are considered superlatively little and contemptible. If we should take the opinions of any given circle as the test of greatness, there would hardly be such a variable term in the English language. It would characterize the loftiest achievements of the human mind, and the meanest; the noblest qualities of the heart, and the basest. It would belong to Halley calculating the return of a comet, to Luther at the diet of Worms, and go down to distinction in occupations that degrade our nature and shock our better feelings.

But among this clashing of opinions is there nothing to determine what constitutes true greatness of character? I think there is; and it may be ascertained by inquiring what constitutes greatness in any other application of the term. We consider any thing great which possesses the best or most essential qualities of its nature in an unusual degree. But observe, it is not the

possession of one quality, however eminent, that secures superiority. There must be a due proportion in the other qualities; a certain harmony and correspondence in the parts. The Peak of Teneriffe, though twelve thousand feet high, is not a great mountain, for it wants extent; and our own Appalachian range does not rank among the greatest mountains of the globe; for though it possesses extent, it wants elevation.

If this mode of judgment be correct, then he only is a great man who possesses the best or most essential qualities of our nature in an unusual degree and in due proportion. But the qualities of human character are of two kinds, intellectual and moral; and these again are subdivided into several subordinate features.

If, so far, we be correct in our premises, it will follow that the world has committed some serious and pernicious mistakes on the subject of human greatness. According to these principles, he is not a great man who owes his distinction merely to adventitious circumstances. Yet there are thousands of names that are esteemed great only because the proprietor occupied a prominent station in the world; and thousands of others esteemed diminutive because unattended by the trappings of human distinction. But what of all that? Can place give greatness?

> "Pigmies are pigmies still, though perch'd on Alps;
> And pyramids, are pyramids in vales."

Nor is he truly great who possesses merely one mental quality in uncommon prominence, but is wanting in the others. For as one beautiful feature will not make a handsome face, neither will one splendid attribute make a great mind.

Nor can he be truly great that possesses uncommon

mental endowments, without corresponding moral powers. Bacon in intellect and learning ranks among the greatest of the human species. But Bacon in his study and Bacon in the world, if we are to credit history, were distinct beings. Possessed of transcendant mental qualities, a power of genius that forced itself into new channels of thought, plunged into the dark unknown and brought to light new principles of philosophy, that stamped his name upon every subsequent discovery in science, and upon every new theory in morals, was yet so dwarfish in his moral stature as to have drawn upon him the paradoxical epithets—

"Greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind."

On the contrary a great man is one whose greatness is in himself, not in circumstances. The elements are within him. His own bosom is the reservoir whence he draws his power to attract admiration or command respect. True, it does not follow that he always will command attention, nor that his worth will be always felt. Nor were that necessary to prove the character true. The fires of Ætna may long slumber unobserved, and the ocean long present nothing but a clear and glassy face, mirroring the passing object and deluding us with its quiescence. But their powers are within, and they only wait the suitable occasion to make them manifest. Let but the mountain belch forth her contents, and the ocean be lashed to fury, and you are amazed at the power that was latent in those calm and tranquil monarchs of their species.

A harmony of mental character is another requisite to a great man. He does not possess one feature in striking prominence, while he is glaringly deficient in others. A man is not great because he possesses a splendid imagi-

nation, but without judgment or memory; or that possesses a capacious and retentive memory without the power of arrangement or combination. A great man is something different from a great collector of facts and particulars, a great musician, poet, or orator. Patrick Henry, great as he certainly was at the forum and the bar, was found to be something less than a great man when he came to grapple with the master spirits that composed the National Congress of 1774. A great man is one who possesses so complete and harmonious a mental character that he can be, whatever it is necessary that he should be. His mental powers are all there, ready to be called into action when needed. Imagination, judgment, memory, reason, all exist, and exist in due proportion; and if he be distinguished in one department rather than another, it is not because he has no power to be distinguished elsewhere, but because circumstances have directed his selection. Who will say that the great lord Bacon,—great in intellect, though not in character, a great mind, not a great man,—could not have made a poet as well as a philosopher? His was a capacity equal to the mightiest undertakings, and that could stoop even to the most humble. He could comprehend the whole planetary system and take in the entire circle of the sciences; and yet descend to all the minutiæ of ordinary life. "His mind," as one graphically expressed it, "was like the trunk of an elephant, that can rive an oak, or pick up a pin." The elements of the poet were with him, delicacy as well as strength, imagination as well as reasoning.

A great man is one who possesses eminent moral endowments in due proportion among themselves, and in just relation to the intellectual character. The moral nature of man is his noblest characteristic, the most im-

portant to all the purposes of his being and elevates him above the brute even more than the intellectual. But both are necessary to decided superiority of character. It is the one of these classes that gives stimulus and direction to the other. Where there are great intellectual abilities and but little moral force, the possessor dreams away his life, like the poet Thompson, in strenuous idleness, and hardly accomplishes any thing worthy of himself. Or if his moral powers be not properly governed so as rightly to direct his intellectual operations he forms one of those meteor lights in literature, that have so often shed a baleful influence on the world. O, had the balance been always maintained between the intellectual and the moral endowments, the good need not to have shed such burning tears upon the memory of a Bolingbroke and a Gibbon, a Byron and a Shelly. I know not that a greater judgment can be inflicted on mankind, than splendid minds without moral principle. Such minds have, indeed, grandeur, nay sublimity; but it is the grandeur of the lightning that blasts what e'er it touches; or the sublimity of the tornado that spreads ruin and desolation wherever it appears. O, it is fearful to see such uncommon power trusted in hands that know not how to use it. Better for us to have the more steady light and genial warmth of our ordinary luminary, than the lurid glare of the misdirected lightning; or to have the softest zephyrs' pleasant fannings, rather than the grandeur of the hurricane; or the fertilizing gentle dews, rather than the terrible sublimity of the tempest and inundation.— How should every believer in the Providence of God pray that our world may be spared the desolating influence of misdirected talent; that virtue may always consecrate talents to the cause of humanity; in a word, that greatness may never exist without goodness.

Again; if it be true that a great man possesses the elements in himself, and is not dependant on circumstances; that he has a harmonious development of all the nobler qualities of the head and the heart, I think it will follow, that a truly great man, is great every where, at home as well as abroad, upon close inspection as well as to a distant gaze, in one situation as well as in another. How this differs from the commonly received notion I need not say. It has somehow or other passed into general acceptance, and the celebrated Dr. Johnson seems to have sanctioned the opinion, that the most eminent men are least eminent at home; and that the brightest characters lose much of their lustre on a nearer view. But if this be so, it must be because of some glaring and radical defect. When there is that completeness of character which makes a great man, there is a just subordination and an harmonious action among all the faculties. The moral powers move in accordance with the intellectual; the passions are all subjugated to the reason, and the actions to the conscience. Such a man is consistent; he always acts like himself; he bears the stamp of his own individuality. There is in him the outline of grandeur and the finishing of beauty. He is like the paintings of the great masters of the older school, sketched out on the largest scale, yet with the exquisite finish of the miniature. Such a man bears examining at every point: and is noble near at hand or afar off. Seen at a distance, the glorious outlines of his character command respect; seen at a nearer view the exquisite finishing and beautiful symmetry of the whole conciliate affection and secure esteem. Such a man is indeed the noblest work of God!—the highest monument of grace! True, he may not be always adequately appreciated. Prejudice or envy may misconstrue his actions; party views may

impute wrong motives; he may sometimes, like an object seen through a mist, appear in colors not his own. But what then? The virtue is within; the greatness is unsullied. Men may misjudge, but Heaven reads his heart; and while puny mortals sneer below, an approving Deity smiles above. He stands

> "Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale and midway cleaves the storm;
> Though round its breast some transient clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

One more element of a great man, I must introduce. It is that he always lives up to his own convictions of the demands of his immortal nature. I cannot conceive of a man truly great, who believes in his celestial nature and lives like an earth-worm; who professes to believe in a better world and lives as if this world were all; who believes in God, and lives as an atheist might live. There is no grandeur in such a character. It is shocking, it is painful. Why is such a spectacle ever presented? Is it because man's passions have dominion over reason? or because interest is stronger than conscience? Or present, inferior things, more influential than future superior things? But this is not grandeur. It is meanness. It is degradation. It argues a sad derangement of the faculties, a dwarfish or depraved moral nature. A proper direction and adjustment of the powers reduces every thing to order, puts every thing in its right place. The nobler faculties have their full development and their perfect influence. No man is great therefore who violates his own convictions of right; who does not honor his own immortality by living up to its demands.

II. It shall be the object of our second division to shew that these elements of a great man belonged to the reve-

red subject of the present discourse. To accomplish this object, it will only be necessary for us to present a brief summary of his life and character. This will not only shew what manner of man he was; but will also unfold the causes which led to so great an elevation of excellence.

Willbur Fisk, was born at Brattleboro, Vermont, on the 31st of August, 1792. His parents are both living and have survived him to endure in their old age a bereavement which few can ever suffer. His genealogy was not illustrious. But in the language of one to whom his character in several features bore a resemblance he might have said,

> "My boast is not that I deduce my birth,
> From loins enthroned, or rulers of the earth;
> No! higher far my proud pretensions rise,
> A child of parents *destin'd* to the skies."

His parents belonged to that large and important class which constitutes the nerve and strength of the nation; which has so greatly enriched every department of the community with talents and worth—viz. the respectable middle class. They possessed all the substantial qualities of New England farmers, but with superior intelligence and information. His father stood high in the estimation of his fellow citizens, and served with great respectability several responsible public offices. His mother was then, and his father has since become a worthy member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and noted for their fervent and consistent piety. His mother with exemplary diligence, and christian faithfulness discharged her obligations; and it was through her instruction, and prayers and example that his mind was first impressed with the importance of sacred things. When in the

twelfth year of his age an event occurred in his father's family which tended to give a practical influence to his early religious instructions. This was the death of a younger brother to whom he was deeply and tenderly attached. Young as he was this circumstance produced a strong and permanent impression upon his mind. He saw the uncertainty of life. He felt the importance of being prepared for death and a better state of being.—Even at that tender age, the Holy Spirit seemed to produce in him deep convictions of sin, and an earnest desire for salvation. Nor did he rest until he sought, and believed that he had found redemption in the blood of Christ. He now became fervently, consistently pious; and gave strong proof of the power of divine grace over almost an infant heart.

His early opportunities of education were but limited. He had always a strong predisposition to learning and a great thirst for knowledge. But unfortunately, in consequence of losses in business, and failure in the engagements of others, his father's circumstances were not sufficient to procure him such means of instruction as he required.

However, at the age of sixteen he was sent for a short time to the grammar school at Peacham. Here he enenjoyed advantages which he had not before, and which greatly stimulated his desire for mental improvement; and visions of intellectual beauty passed before his mind enticing him strongly to enter the walks of literature and science. Here he saw young men fitting themselves for college and heard them talk over their plans and prospects, and his heart burned to join their band and follow their pursuits. He found, moreover, that many young men of slender means made out to obtain an education by working their way and supporting themselves. Hav-

ing with some difficulty obtained his father's consent, he determined to make the attempt. He therefore commenced his preparatory course, and about the year 1812 entered the University of Vermont at Burlington. But "the events of 1813," to use his own language, "drove the students from the temple of Minerva to make room for the sons of Mars." The College buildings were converted into barracks. He now entered Brown University at Providence, Rhode Island, where he graduated with distinction and commenced bachelor of arts in 1815.

It was at this time his intention to study law, and with that view entered the office of a highly respectable attorney. But again his circumstances embarrassed him. At the end of six months he abandoned his object and engaged as private tutor in a gentleman's family in Maryland. Here he continued but a short time, not more than two years, when the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs made it needful for him to return to his native air. On his way he was taken very ill with a fever at Burlington, Vt., and was brought very near to death. But the ways of Providence are merciful. He was spared for his own good and the benefit of many. On arriving at home he found a powerful revival of religion in progress, and by this means his serious impressions which had very much declined during his scholastic career were revived with greater force than ever. The complexion of his life was now entirely changed. He gave himself away to Christ, and entered upon the work of the sacred ministry, and thought of nothing but to be a plain, faithful and efficient minister of the New Testament.

His talents, zeal and piety immediately attracted attention, and he rose rapidly to an elevated place in the confidence and affection of his brethren and of the church. Of this substantial proof was given in the im-

portant stations assigned to him. Few men obtain as early as he the appointment of Presiding Elder, or that of delegate to the General Conference. A farther mark of confidence was reposed in him in being elected principal of the Wesleyan Academy at Wilbraham, and then President of the Wesleyan University, in both which stations he secured such unqualified approbation. Nor is this all. He was appointed at a very critical time to the important and responsible office of delegate to the British Conference; and twice he was elected a Bishop in the Methodist Church—the highest honor in her gift. May I not safely add that there is scarcely a man in the church that claimed him for a son whose death would have been as deeply and as widely felt, or who could not have been better spared?

Nor was the respect paid him confined to his own Church. Various Colleges under different religious denominations have united to confer on him literary distinction; and it is but a short time since that one of the most distinguished classical scholars of the age dedicated to him a new publication on a classical language.

Nor is his name confined to our country; nor will his loss be felt merely at home. In Europe he has many friends and admirers who will hear of his death with dismay. In Asia, too, there are those to whom his name is as a household word; and in South America the sad intelligence will produce many a deep drawn sigh. But O Liberia! What will thou say when it shall be told thee that the tongue of thy eloquent advocate is silent in the dust? And thou, too, poor Oregon! how wilt thou feel when the tidings shall reach thee, thy patron—thy father—is no more! Methinks I hear a voice of lamentation coming from Europe, Asia, Africa and America, whose united cry is, "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

From this brief glance at the life of our late venerated President, we may take a general view of his claims to that high designation we have appropriated to him—a great man.

1. It is obvious that he owed but little to adventitious circumstances. He derived not his birth from a long line of storied ancestry, which at once elevates an individual on a pedestal that commands the gaze of thousands and in whom a little merit passes for a great deal more than its real value. It was not his name that drew attention to his talents; it was his talents that gave lustre to his name. He forced his own way out of obscurity, and by the power of his own genius and the excellence of his character, carved out a name for himself in the temple of renown. Nor was he at birth ushered at once into the regions of elegance and refinement, and surrounded by those social blandishments which tend to rub off the asperities of nature, to polish the manners, and beautify the character. Nor was he nursed in the lap of affluence, and aided in his pursuits by all the facilites which wealth secures. No; in all these respects he had few advantages which we have not all possessed. He sprang from the people, from the substantial, intelligent yeomanry of New-England. How then did he attain to such eminence in science and literature? It was by the force of his own genius; by patient, laborious, untiring industry. Precisely, young gentlemen, as many of you are now pursuing the same course. And how did he attain such elegance of manners;—manners at once dignified yet familiar; modest, yet always calm and self-possessed; manners, indeed, which all admired but so few attain, even under the most favorable auspices? It was the quickness of his observation which enabled him readily to appropriate to himself whatever was graceful and becoming in others. It was the superiority of his

mind, which always commanded respect, and every where secured him an ascendancy. But above all, it was the dominant influence of piety; which by purifying the heart from selfish feelings, renders its possessor always kind, and, therefore polite; and by destroying paltry vanity and ambition and taking away all undue anxiety how to appear, makes its possessor always appear to advantage, because it makes him easy and natural, simple and unconstrained.

It is evident, then, that his greatness was in himself. He may not inappropriately be styled a self-made man; under the blessing of Heaven, the architect of his own destinies.

2. His intellectual endowments were of a very superior order. His was without question a great mind—a mind truly great. All his faculties were unusually strong and admirably developed. A beautiful illustration of every mental susceptibility might be drawn from his productions, had we time to make the selections. His memory was capacious and retentive: witness the stores of information he had collected. His imagination was lively and vigorous. How often have you seen the living image rise up and stand out before you under the vividness of his descriptions. He possessed all the qualities necessary to a clear, close, cogent logician. Witness his tract on the Unitarian question, than which there is, perhaps, hardly a clearer, neater, or more conclusive piece of reasoning in the English language. But of all his faculties none was more surprising than the soundness of his judgment. He seemed to possess an almost intuitive perception of truth and right. Of this you have all had proof in the remarkable prudence of his conduct; in the wisdom of his counsels; in the sagacity which generally marked his undertakings; and in a

blamelessness of life which almost defied censure. If I ever knew a person who never by an unguarded word or an unbecoming action detracted from the dignity of his own character, that man was Dr. Fisk. And when I say that of one who was not by any means taciturn, and as prompt in action as in speech, I have paid as high a eulogy as we dare pay to human wisdom.

But we would not be misunderstood. We do not mean to signify that Dr. Fisk excelled every man in every thing, or in any one thing. Far from it. Many may have excelled him in each particular. We do not claim for him the polyglottic skill of Sir Wm. Jones or Dr. Adam Clarke; nor the metaphysical acuteness of Locke or Edwards; nor the gorgeous imagination of Chalmers or Jeremy Taylor; nor the profound mathematical knowledge of Newton or La Place; nor the refined elegance of Addison or Robert Hall. But he possessed more of all these talents than any one of them singly taken; moreover none of us know what he might have been had he confined his attention to any one department; and still less, had he lived the ordinary length of human life. But it was not in any one feature that his superiority or his strength lay. It was in the beautiful harmony of the whole; it was in his completeness of mental character. Here lay his peculiar excellence. With every faculty beyond the common standard, the whole were bound together by a zone of grace that charmed every spectator.

It was to this harmony of mental character that he owed, in a great degree, his success as a public speaker. Owing to his versatility of talent he was ready upon every subject, and could accommodate himself to every occasion. Did the subject and occasion demand argument? He had but to apply his clear, discriminating mind, and forth there flowed arguments forcible and

strong, such as reason could not well resist, nor sophistry evade. Did it require imagination? He had but to give wings to his fancy, and like the wand of the magician, it could bring troops of images, tripping in sportive beauty before the eye, or marching in dignity and grandeur across the scene. Or did circumstances demand the chastened humor, the harmless satire? We have seen him at a deliberative assembly when angry feelings were enkindling, rise in his calm and playful manner, with that sportive smile you all know so well, and by one stroke of delicate humor, avert the gathering storm and change the whole current of feeling. Those beautiful flashes came like a sunbeam breaking through a gloomy atmosphere, throwing a momentary radiance on every surrounding object. But his humor was delicate, not broad and coarse; his satire was not biting nor unfair; but tempered with christian meekness and charity. Or did the occasion demand emotion? Was it necessary to arouse the sympathies of an audience? His ductile mind and vivid and vigorous sensibilities were ready for the task. He could not only logically demonstrate a proposition, or unravel a knotty point in theology; he could with equal effect address himself to the heart and awaken the loftiest aspirations of the human soul. Some of you have heard the eloquence, the pathos with which he could plead the various causes of benevolence; and many of you have felt the unction with which he would discourse to us from the Book of God and urge upon men the claims of eternity. For ourselves we have scarcely known when to call him greatest, couching the lance in the arena of theological contest; or wielding the sword of the spirit in the place of spiritual warfare; or exercising the shield of faith and breast plate of charity in a still closer contest with the powers of darkness.

There was, moreover, a remarkable uniformity and suitability in his performances. He did not always wait for great occasions to draw out his resources. Were I to enumerate his most successful efforts which it was my privilege to hear, I should certainly include a sermon preached at Durham during a revival; and I have heard it said by the people of those places that some of his most powerful sermons were preached in the little churches of Middlefield and Berlin, on common occasions and without any peculiar interest or excitement to call out his energies. We do not mean, however, that he never failed, or that he was always equally great. Far from it. Had he always preached alike he would have been something less than Dr. Fisk. It is the part of a great man to adapt himself to the occasion. Suitability and propriety are essential qualities in all performances. He always does best who does what the occasion requires, and no more. This he generally did. He could rise to the level of the most extraordinary occasions and gracefully descend to the most familiar. And if he ever disappointed expectation, it was because he ventured to appear in circumstances under which an inferior mind would not have dared to make an effort. A little man has not an inch of his stature to spare. A great man can afford to stoop sometimes, and appear the more becoming for it. There are some whose public efforts are so disproportionately above the ordinary tone of their minds, that it requires extraordinary occasions and high excitement to raise them to the proper pitch. There are others, who though they may not always be equally well prepared, yet are not afraid to come forward on every necessary occasion with what they have. Those who love the meteor's flash and the lightning's glare will prefer the former. They who choose the less brilliant but

more uniform light of day, will prefer the latter. A chief beauty in Dr. Fisk's mental character, as already observed, was its harmony, its uniformity. It did not move convulsively, fitfully There was nothing spasmodic about him; there were no paroxysms. His greatness sat upon him easily, gracefully, naturally. To reverse the metaphor applied to a distinguished man of a former age, he had the inspiration of the sybil without her contortions, and the strength of the oak without its sinuosities.

3. It was my design to have illustrated at greater length the harmony of his moral energies—those powers, I mean, which stimulate to action and modify the manners. These were beautifully developed, and admirably balanced. He had neither that sluggishness of nature, that torpor of soul, which leaves the intellectual powers to stagnate and decay; nor that reckless energy which outstrips reason and discretion and defeats its own aims by attempting too much or going too fast. If there was any deficiency in his moral organization, it was in two points; first in having no mercy upon himself, and the other, in having too much mercy for others. But these faults, if faults they were, leaned so much to virtue's side, and are so much easier to discern than to do better, that one hardly knows whether most to censure or admire.

4. I should like also to have enlarged more fully upon his practical qualities. He was no dreaming visionary, or learned recluse. He gained knowledge for practical purposes, and considered knowledge of little value that could not be turned to utility. There is reason, too, to believe that this habit was adopted on principle. He has been heard to say that when young he was a good deal of a visionary; that he seemed to live in a region peopled by the creations of his own fancy; but that in

more mature years he found the necessity of changing his habits of feeling, and addicting himself more to business. And it was his advice to a young gentleman, "if you want to do any good in the world, you must learn to be a man of business—a practical man." But we pass on to notice what is to us a more interesting and important feature of his character.

5. His personal piety. This was after all his crowning grace—his chief attraction.

We have already seen that he became a subject of renewing grace in his youth, and that he lived for several years the life of a spiritual, consistent christian. He continued to sustain this character until he went to the Grammar School at Peacham. Here he found but little sympathy in his religious feelings, nothing to aid, and many things to discourage him. The consequence was that his serious impressions were in a great degree effaced, though he always continued to respect religion, and never gave up private prayer, or ceased attending the house of God. But the sensible influence, the vivifying power of grace was gone. In this state of mind "having the form of godliness but without the power thereof," he continued through his collegiate course and until after his return from Maryland. The sickness which he had at Burlington again arrested his attention, and the impressions thus renewed, were perfected during the revival which he found in progress on his return home. Then he gave himself anew to Christ, and under a deep conviction of duty resolved to devote himself to the work of the ministry. At first he hesitated what church he should join; and while in this state of mind, wrote to one who then, and since, has had of all others the best opportunity to know his heart; "I shall make this a subject of prayer, and entreat God to show me my duty. If

I shall be convinced that among that people (the Methodists,) I shall be most in the way of my duty, with them I shall continue. For though I could have a much better living with almost any other denomination, yet I am determined to do my duty at the loss of all things." The result of this investigation you all know; nor did he ever repent the step he then took. Though liberal in his feelings and expansive in his charity, he always remained conscientiously a firm, genuine, uwavering Methodist. This lofty, generous spirit of christian heroism never left him. It was a shining trait in his character through his whole life, and shone out brightly to the very last.

His personal piety was of a high order. It was deeply seated in the heart, and swayed a delightful influence over the entire man. It was not sullen or morose; not cynical and repulsive. It was cheerful as the day, and melting as charity. He was eminently spiritually minded. His piety was not occasional and uneven. It seemed a part of himself, and it shone forth every where. We have seen him in the cottage of the poor, and in the drawing-room of the elegant, and in either place his piety was recognized and felt. It led him to take a deep interest in the welfare of his friends and neighbors. I presume there is scarcely an individual in this house who has not had an interest in his supplications at the throne of grace. For he never failed whenever he heard of any affliction or distress in any family, to remember them at his own domestic altar. One other fact illustrative of his piety we may add. He has been heard to say that since he has been a minister, he had not known the time when he had gone to bed, without feeling that if he had waked in eternity all would be well.

His humility was striking. We have an evidence of this in the views he entertained of his ministerial qualifi-

cations. In his early days, he said, "my greatest affliction on this subject is, that the people where I labor and my brethren in the ministry, from a knowledge of my having had the advantages of a public education, expect more of me than they find in me. They find many others with not half my advantages go before me in the excellence and usefulness of their performances. And the greater their expectations, the greater their disappointment, and the lower I sink in their estimation. But this is good for my naturally ambitious heart. It enables me to take an instructive lesson of humility from Him who has said 'learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.' Lord! help me to become a fool that I may be wise. And if I glory in aught, let it be in my infirmities." The same trait was evinced when the degree of doctor in theology was first conferred upon him. He thought at once of declining it, alleging that neither his age, piety nor learning entitled him to such an honor. In a few days, however, some one remarked that he could not avoid it without a public renunciation, as the students, (he was then at Wilbraham,) began already to give him the title. He replied that in that case he would let it go. For to come out and publicly disclaim it, would look too much like an affectation of humility. It was in this spirit he bore his honors, rather as a burden and responsibility to tremble under, than as a distinction to be proud of or to glory in. The same trait was observable on his appointment to the Presidency of the Wesleyan University. At first he thought of declining, and yielded, at length, out of deference to the opinions and wishes of the church. It was equally observable in his private and social intercourse. He never seemed desirous of drawing attention to his own concerns. He was remarkably free from all egotism; indeed, scarcely ever alluding to himself or his

performances, and never, but in the most intimate friendship.

He was remarkable for his meekness and evenness of temper. This is more striking from the fact that when a child he was passionate and excitable. But he has been heard to thank God, that since he had felt the influence of religion he had hardly known what it was to feel angry. We have seen him tried and even insulted; but who saw him angry? At the time of the outrage upon his feelings by a student, the only one ever perpetrated by them, how did we admire the calmness, the composure of his manner; nay, his kindness to the misguided perpetrator of that insult. His temper like the tree which Moses cast into the streams of Marah, had the power of turning the bitter into sweetness. It was this perfect self-command which gave him such superiority as a governor. He never forgot himself; he never forfeited respect, or lowered his own dignity; and by this means he always maintained the vantage ground. What can be a surer proof of greatness? what more incontestibly avouches the presence of a master spirit, than this unmoveable composure? What greater instance can be presented of moral grandeur than this constant ascendency of the superior faculties—this constant subordination of the lower to the higher principles of our nature? We admire bravery; we applaud the man who exhibits military prowess. But a man may conquer cities and be a slave; may conquer the whole world, and be conquered by his own vices. Shall we, then, admire an Alexander with his midnight revels and frantic homicides? or a Marlborough with his despicable avarice? or a Bonaparte with his criminal, selfish ambition? No! rather give us the more splendid spectacle of a man who with strong passions, has a mind strong enough to govern them. For "he that is slow

to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." But "he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls."

I ought not to omit his zeal for the cause of religion. This was not an occasional impulse. It was not confined to the platform or the pulpit. However earnest, zealous, and successful on such occasions, his zeal was not put on like a loose garment to go out in. No; it was the habitual feeling, the ruling, abiding all-pervading principle of his soul. It was this that led him to advocate the establishment of our literary institutions. He felt the injurious effects of being at institutions where there was little or no religious influence, and he desired to provide places of our own, in which young men could have all the advantages of education, without endangering their religious principles. This was the reason of his entering so heartily into the project of establishing the Wilbraham Academy and the Wesleyan University. What pains he took to promote the religious welfare of those committed to his care you all know. A sentiment he expressed in his last illness is indicative of his constant feeling. "It has always been my aim, and as far as I know the feelings of the Faculty, it has been the aim of us all, to send young men into the world to make it better." Hence the earnestness of his preaching, the fervency of his prayers, the constancy of his exertions to promote the religious interests of the University. You well remember the exhortations he has given, the private counsels or admonitions, as occasion required, and the tears he has shed over the penitent student returning to his God. This is the true test of religious zeal. Many motives of a questionable character, may concur to produce an appearance of zeal before the public and on

great occasions. That which is seen and felt in a person every where, and at all times must be genuine.

But I must hasten to a more awful part of my subject—a part which I approach almost with dismay—the closing scenes. Would that those scenes had never transpired; or, since such was the will of God, would that the impressions of them might abide on our hearts forever!

Dr. Fisk's constitution was always delicate. When a child he had an attack of illness which left behind it that fearful cough which so long beforehand "prophesied of the sepulchre." During his collegiate course, also, he had several severe turns of fever; and while in Maryland, as we have observed before, he had an hemorrhage from the lungs. Indeed, he has always appeared to be walking on the verge of the grave. Thirteen years ago we remember he seemed almost like a dying man, and no one thought he would have lived half so long. We ought not, therefore, so much complain that he was cut down so soon, as be thankful that he was spared so long. However, we are never ready to part with our dearly prized mercies, and so we continued to cherish the hope of our revered President's continuing with us. But alas! the time had to come. His race was finished, his work accomplished, and he was to enter into the joy of his Lord.

But I must hasten to approach that scene which I dread to touch—from which my heart recoils—his dying scene. And O, what a death was that! No powers of mine are adequate to do it justice. So calm, so sublime, so patient, so triumphant, since it must take place, it was worth a lifetime to witness it. It was a scene

——— "quite in the verge of Heaven."

When it was announced to him that there was no hope

of his recovering, he was perfectly calm, observing "death had no terrors to him," and began to arrange his temporal affairs as if only preparing for a pleasant journy. While all around were drowned in sorrow, he alone was calm, serene and happy. The subject of distress—of nature's deepest, keenest agony was the fountain of consolation to all around him. All felt it, from the aged mother, with the wife and adopted daughter, down to the casual visitant of his dying chamber.

Instead of giving the different scenes and expressions consecutively, for to do that, indeed, would of itself require a volume, I choose rather to touch upon the more prominent features exhibited. And it is admirable what a perfect identity of character there was throughout the whole. He was Dr. Fisk to the very last. There was no falling off from his dignity, no obscuring of his excellencies. On the contrary, every virtue, every trait, seemed to acquire new lustre—increasing radiance.

> "Thus while the veil of flesh decayed,
> His beauties brightened through the shade;
> Charms which his lowly heart concealed,
> In nature's weakness were revealed."

We were most forcibly struck with his patience, humility, elevation of thought, philanthropy, oblivion of self and regard for others, faith in Christ and triumphant hope.

His patience was so conspicuous, because it was so singularly tried. Owing to obstructed respiration, he could not lie down. For fourteen days and nights before his death he had to sit in his chair propped up with pillows, with the exception, perhaps, of only an hour or so in twenty-four. The extreme weariness produced by this, it is, perhaps, impossible for us to conceive. The agony was almost insupportable. Yet there was no murmur,

no complaining. He would some times express his feelings in such language, "O weary, weary me! when shall I find rest;—rest in the grave?" Again, after a paroxysm of difficult breathing, from which it was scarcely thought he could recover, he would say "what! all this, and death not yet?" And then he would check himself, saying "If it were the will of God he would cheerfully submit. It is sweet to have our own will lost in God's!" Once he remarked "I groan and sigh a good deal; and I have, perhaps, been in the habit of that all my life. But I hope it is not impatience; and I think it is not. It is only one of nature's own methods of expressing her agony." No one supected him of impatience. There was not a mark of it upon his face. That calm, clear brow, was as smooth and unwrinkled as though a pang had never crossed his frame.

The same humility which ever characterized him was still remarkable; indeed, much more so, as his circumstances led him to speak of himself, as he never did when well. All his expressions indicated a lowly opinion of himself. One remarked to him, that there was less to regret in his life, than in that of almost any one he ever knew." His reply was; "I do not feel so at all. I seem full of imperfections. I have nothing to trust in but Christ. On expressing his gratification at the harmony and union which had always existed in the Faculty, one observed "You were the magnet which drew us together. We all loved you." He answered, "Yes; but not because I was worthy." Again he said, "I feel that I am a sinner; a sinner saved by grace; and if I get to Heaven I shall have as much reason to sing that song as any there." Although every body wondered at the amount of labor he accomplished, we heard him complaining that he had done so little for

God. "I want," he said, "a score of years more to do any thing like what a man ought to do in the course of his life." Again, "I shall be a star of small magnitude in Heaven; but it is a wonder that I shall get there at all."

His dignity of mind and elevation of thought were never more conspicuous than at this time. Every thing about him bespoke an intellect of a superior order. Even his aberrations—for a part of the time he was delirious—were indicative of thought, so naturally did it seem inwrought in his very structure. Every expression seemed to be a fragment of something important—a detached link of a golden chain. At one time he was heard to say, "It has saved us from many absurdities"——at another, "we do not undertake to correct popular expressions."—At one time he seemed to be preaching; now discoursing with his friends on religion, and again lecturing or arranging classes. But in all this there was nothing frivolous, nothing low, nothing unworthy of a great mind.

But there was one scene of surpassing elevation.—Seeing, on one side of him, the partner of his bosom, "whom," he said, "he had always loved, and loved to love, and never more than now;" and their adopted daughter on the other, he said "let us pray together once more." And then putting an arm around the neck of each, while panting for breath and gasping out a few syllables at a time, he offered up a prayer, which, for pathos, power, and sublimity, appeared to surpass any thing that ever fell from his lips before! It seemed the effect of inspiration!

His philanthropy never forsook him. He took a lively interest to the last in every thing relating to the happiness of mankind; and in his mind the happiness of man-

kind, and the spread of true religion were identical. He evinced by his remarks the interest he felt in every benevolent undertaking. He observed "there were some things I had hoped to see done before leaving the world. But what am I, that I should have a part in these things? Any active mind can do them." One present desired to know what things he particularly alluded to; when, after a pause, he added, "there is the poor Wesleyan University. But," he said, speaking to the professors who were present, "I hope you will stand by it, and that God will bless it." He never felt as if his office in the Institution could not be filled; but he justly believed that no one could feel the solicitude or would be willing to do for it all that he had. Hence when one spoke of the difficulty of supplying his place, he remarked, "it will be easy to obtain another president; but it may not be so easy to procure another father." Speaking in another place of his anticipations of future rest, he remarked, "but what is rest to me that I should indulge anticipations of it, while there are so many unconverted in the world going downward to eternal woe? I see very much to be done; but any active mind can do it; and the work of God is in his own hands. He can do without me."

His regard for others and oblivion of self, was always an interesting feature in his character, and never appeared more strikingly than now. No one could be less exacting, or in his situation less engrossing. It seemed to give him pain that he was the occasion of so much trouble to others. Often he would refuse little comforts because, though they afforded him some relief, yet, he said, so disproportionate to the trouble they would give his attendants that they would not pay for it. His acknowledgments for kindness were touching. To one he would

say, " have you left your own dear home"—to another—" your own sweet little flock"—to a third—" your comfortable bed, to wait on me—poor unworthy me?" " I do not know what I am spared for, I am sure, unless it be to make manifest the patience of my friends. Sure never man had such friends." To a young gentleman, a student who had been of great service to him from his peculiar tact in adjusting his pillows, and was much with him, he said, " My kind young friend, you have watched me faithfully. You have tried even to make the pillows of death easy." And then, apparently fearing that another who was present might feel slighted, he turned and said, " You, too, have been kind to me. You will not lose your reward: for a reward is promised to one who gives even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple." At another time we hear him exclaim, " O, that I could die in an obscure corner rather than give my friends so much trouble."

It was very manifest that all his trust for salvation was in the merits of the Atoning Lamb; and in Christ Jesus he had full assurance of his acceptance with God. Of this we have already had ample proof. To him emphatically Christ was precious. He disclaimed all idea of receiving the promised reward on the score of right. " Rights! I have no rights: but Christ has; and he confers them on me." Again he said, " Jesus! Oh lovely name! No name so charming! He saves his people from their sins! I am a sinner; therefore the name of Jesus suits me best!" And again, " My soul is centred in the love of God in Christ Jesus."

He was favored with a most confident and triumphant hope of future bliss. Yet this was not so much characterized by ecstatic emotion, as by a calm, confident reliance upon the word and promise of God in Jesus Christ.

His reliance upon the great doctrines of the Gospel was unwavering. "They are God's truths," said he, "and will bear the light of eternity." And what strength of assurance was there in those words which were spoken with so much calm confidence, and unutterable hope. "Vain reasoners tell us the body and soul will go down into the dust together. But it is not so. So far from my body pressing my soul down to the dust, I feel as if my soul had almost power to raise my body upward and bear it away. And it will at last by the power of God effectually bear it to Heaven. For its attractions are thitherward." At one time, after having tried to lie down, on being replaced in his chair, he faintly said, "from the chair to the throne!" At another time coming to him when the vital functions seemed about to cease, he remarked with perfect composure "I believe I am going." And soon after said

> "There is my house and portion fair,
> My treasure and my *friends* are there;"—

—some of them, at least, and the rest are on their way." And again, as the physician stood by his chair feeling his pulse and while his distress for breath was extreme, looking up, he inquired "is it fluttering?" "Not fluttering," the doctor said "but very low." He sighed forth in answer, "the hour of release is at hand!"

Two days before he breathed his last, I was conversing with him as to his prospects of the future. He was, as usual, full of peace, and tranquil hope. He was suffering severely from his agonizing weariness and difficult respiration. I observed that it was a great consolation to know that these distresses could not last for ever:—That a rest remains for the people of God, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest." He responded with peculiar emphasis, "Bless

God for that!" The next day on entering his room I found him lethargic. Consciousness was ebbing fast away. It was difficult to rouse him so as to fix his attention. Nevertheless I went up to him and putting my hand in his, said, "I have come to see you, sir, once more. Do you know me?" With his dying hands he faintly grasped mine, and distinctly whispered "Yes;—glorious hope!" These were the last words I heard him speak. I believe they were the last he consciously uttered. He was fast sinking into a state of coma, from which his spirit was not aroused until it awoke replumed and glorified in the celestial world. And though the death struggle was terrible, yet that purified spirit seemed to leave behind it the stamp of its own glorious destiny. He that beheld that corpse in the habiliments of the grave would say, "that was the casket of a splendid jewel!" so much did it seem to smile upon the occupant which had gone to take possession of a nobler house above. The very happiness of Heaven seemed to be reflected in the countenance of the dead.

Officers! Students! Friends! of the Wesleyan University.

The scene is closed! The vision is ended! Our prophet is no more! In the olden time when Elijah was about to be taken up to Heaven in a whirlwind, he said to his servant Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan." But Elijah said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So they came to Jordan. "And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither; so that they two went over on dry ground." And Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken

away from thee. Now Elisha knew no better thing to desire, and so he said "Let, I pray thee, a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." And his master said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless if thou *see* me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." And they went on and talked, and "behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven. And Elijah SAW it," and rapt in a transport of astonishment and grief, he exclaimed, "My father! My father! The chariot of Israel! And the horsemen thereof!" And he saw him no more. But he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and with it he also smote the waters of Jordan, crying "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And the waters knew the virtues of that wonder-working mantle and recognized the name by which they were adjured. And lo! "they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And the sons of the prophets who were near, saw it and were astonished and they whispered to each other, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha!"

Friends and brethren! Our prophet is translated. Our master spirit is no more. Often have we, and many of you much oftener than myself, seen him go down into the troubled waters. But before that mantle of christian excellence which he wore, the turbid elements have been calmed and all discord ceased. No difficulty could long subsist before such a spirit. We went down with him also to the place of his departure; for like Elisha our hearts exclaimed, 'We will not leave thee!' And we were edified and blessed with his conversation until by faith we saw his ransomed spirit step into the chariot of fire, and take its flight into the realms above, and in mingled anguish and exultation, we exclaimed, 'My

father! my father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!' But, my brethren, who of us said, let a double portion of his spirit be upon me? Where, where, in this company are the Elisha's who have caught the falling mantle of our ascended Elijah?

Brethren of the University! Catch that mantle and wear it as your safeguard. You cannot have a better panoply. With it you may approach difficulties and they will vanish. The waters will divide, the storm shall be a calm; and the sons of the prophets shall recognize the virtues of that mantle and will say to each other, "behold the spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha!"

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